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I.

THEISTIC EVOLUTION.

LESLIE STEPHEN somewhere cites a suggestion of Bishop Butler that nations as well as individuals may go mad. However this may be as to other professions, the imputation of aberrancy has for long time lain upon the investigators of nature, and the opinion is widespread that since the appearance of Darwin's famous book the disease has reached an acute stage. To outsiders it is difficult to comprehend why naturalists have abandoned the old scheme of instantaneous creations and catastrophic exterminations of species, which processes were supposed to have been enacted over and over again through long ages; and have rejected the types and archetypes of the comparative anatomists, with their beautiful evidences of design, in favor of a theory which seems to relegate all animated nature to the chapter of accidents.

Some intelligent people find it impossible even to understand what *Evolution* signifies, and start with erroneous definitions, deriving extraordinary conclusions from their own errors. The theory of Evolution does not, for example, teach that a dog, or that a dog's descendant, may be transformed into a cat; or that a dandelion, itself or its posterity, can in any length of time become a rose. Yet how great is the difficulty experienced by some in understanding that it does not break down any of the barriers of actually existing species? Its real effort is to account for the cross-resemblances now found between dog and cat, by the supposition that both have come from some common ancestor, which was neither one nor other. It also declares that "laws of nature" (whatever is understood by this term) and the whole environment

II.

THE WITNESS OF APOSTOLIC LITERATURE TO APOSTOLIC HISTORY.*

THE student of Christianity, and in fact every thoughtful Christian, will wish to obtain as clear an idea as possible of apostolic history, under the conviction that it is essential to a right knowledge of what Christianity really is. We include in "Apostolic History" the life of Jesus Christ, as well as the whole course of events in and with which the apostles are said to have delivered their message concerning Christ and to have established Christian churches. The conceptions which men have of this history are closely and necessarily related to their opinions about Christianity. For the latter has always linked itself with the assertion of this cycle of historical events, whereby it claims to have been both established and authenticated as from God. The view that the Christian religion is either a philosophy or a practical life, independent of its origin and needing no support from its history, has never been the conviction of general Christian experience and has only attained currency in modern times. Christianity has never been so understood by the Church. It did not establish itself even in the modern world on this supposition. This was certainly not the supposition of the apostles, as the New Testament unquestionably shows. Moreover the interpretations of Christianity whereby it is represented as merely a philosophy or a practical life, are never the same thing as historical Christianity. They are invariably either a sublimation of the latter into speculative reasoning identical with the current philosophy of the day, or with the peculiar theorizing of an individual thinker, or else they reduce Christian doctrine to natural theology and Christian duty to simple ethics. These resultants may be true or false, but they ought not to be called Christianity; and the process is none the less fallacious and deceptive when the terminology of historical Christianity is retained while its historical meaning is rejected. Christianity therefore necessarily looks back to its origin and our

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view of the latter will certainly determine the chief features of our view of the former.

In fact, however, even the advocates of a rationalized Christianity find themselves, equally with their opponents, impelled to give their own account of apostolic history. Christianity is so plainly an historical phenomenon, growing out of a large historical movement in ancient society, that an account of its beginnings is necessary even for those who interpret it differently from the Church and from its founders themselves. It asserts so loudly the truth of certain events, supernatural in character and, if true, unparalleled in importance for both human thought and life, and it so explicitly maintains its own origin out of these events, that he who ventures to transmute it into anything else than what its first founders declared it to be, must for consistency's sake provide another explanation of the way in which the traditional belief arose. It can never be a matter of indifference whether the alleged facts are real or not; whether the alleged apostolic history is true or not. For if true, these are decisive facts; if they be doubted, other facts to take their place must be provided. Honesty and completeness of thought will not permit the matter to remain in abeyance. If the history, in its chief facts and features, was different from what has been commonly believed, the origin of the religion must be made intelligible in some other way; and no alternative explanation can stand which does not explain the history as satisfactorily as the traditional explanation does. Hence, rationalism is driven back as necessarily as the Church to the inquiry what the facts of apostolic history really were.

And the only direct evidence for this history is found in apostolic literature, *i. e.*, in the books of the New Testament. The latter may, of course, be studied from many other points of view, and they make their holy impress upon the minds of multitudes who are not in the least interested in historical criticism. But to the student of Christianity, and indeed to the increasing number of thoughtful inquirers, this literature is of peculiar interest because of its bearing on the history out of which it sprang. Christianity appears, almost from its very beginning, as a literature-producing movement. It soon began to embody itself in written documents as well as in human lives and visible institutions. Lives perish and institutions change; but books remain. Whether preserved in constant use, or whether buried in Egyptian tombs and Sinaitic monasteries, they speak to us directly from the age in which they were composed and become immortal witnesses to the history of the past.

Hence the discussion of early Christianity has been in modern

times very largely a literary one. It has consisted, that is, in the study and criticism of the extant Christian literature which professes to have come from the apostolic and post-apostolic centuries. The discussion has been conducted, we must admit, with perfect freedom, sometimes amounting to veritable *abandon*. Literary criticism requires delicate perception, fairness in combining and discriminating evidence, the consciousness of its own limitations, and a faithful adjustment of its facts to other kinds of facts and lines of inquiry. The temptation of the literary critic is to fall a victim to the seductions of his own *finesse*; really to create facts instead of ascertaining them; to follow the delicate and fascinating suggestions of his own ingenuity regardless of the force of other considerations lying out of his favorite domain. This has been an evil wherever literary criticism has been cultivated, whether in sacred or profane literature. That the proper precautions have been frequently forgotten by New Testament critics is proved by the many ingenious hypotheses concerning the origin and relations of these books which have been rejected by the consensus of all scholars. Yet, we, who believe in the inspiration of the New Testament, must admit that the books are the natural evidence out of which knowledge of the history is to be reached and that the examination of them is to be pursued in a rational and rigidly unprejudiced way. In other words, we must meet bad criticism with good, if we can; speculative and fanciful criticism with sober and reasonable; anti-supernaturalistic criticism with another kind, thoroughly rational and not afraid to believe in whatever facts God may have to teach us in history. Nor need we hesitate to learn whatever even a destructive criticism has to tell us. No misinterpretation can be plausible which does not build on some element of truth; and the collection of such overlooked elements is for the ultimate advantage of all, by whomever it may have been made. The study of the literature therefore is the avenue leading to the history. We must find our way through the documents to the facts. Thus the claim of the New Testament books to be the literary products of the apostolic age makes them the study of the philosopher and the historian, as they are of the humblest believer.

Special interest, moreover, attaches to the witness borne by the New Testament books to the historical origin of Christianity because of the position taken, both as regards the literature and the history of the apostolic age, by the school of critics which at present is most prominently before the public and whose influence is felt by many who refuse to be classed as "Ritschlians" themselves. Prof. Harnack's new book, entitled *Die Chronologie der altchristlich-*

en Literatur, may be taken as representative of this school, as it is also one of the most noteworthy publications, within the sphere of early Christian criticism, which has appeared for many a day. It is professedly an account of the Christian literature of the first two centuries until the time of Irenæus, and registers the results which in the author's opinion critical investigation has reached. The high reputation of Prof. Harnack as critic and historian, the large influence which his personality and his writings are exerting on the younger generation of theological students, have made this volume specially significant and already it has attained to fame. The feature of it which calls for special mention in view of our present discussion is the remarkable degree in which he has returned to the traditional opinion concerning the dates and authenticity of the New Testament books. He thinks that Mark's Gospel should be assigned to the years 65-70; our Greek Matthew to 70-75, and Luke to a few years later, say 78-90 (p. 654). Though he denies that the fourth Gospel was written by the Apostle John, yet he describes it as "the Gospel of John the Apostle through John the Presbyter," and as written not later than the very beginning of the second century (p. 659). The Acts likewise belong to the years 78-93 (p. 250), while all the epistles of Paul are declared to be genuine except the Pastorals, and they have a genuine Pauline kernel (pp. 238, 239). A slight doubt is expressed about the Ephesians, but on the whole it is ranked as genuine. The Epistle to the Hebrews is reckoned with some liberality of margin to the years 65-95, while the Apocalypse, though supposed to be a Christian redaction of a Jewish work, is assigned in its present form to the traditional date at the close of Domitian's reign (p. 246), and, be it especially noted, to the same author as the fourth Gospel (p. 675, note 1). The catholic epistles indeed receive less favorable judgment. The authenticity of Peter's and James' and Jude's is denied, while John's are assigned, like the fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse, to the shadowy hand of the presbyter instead of to the well-known apostle. But no one at all familiar with the history of modern New Testament criticism can fail to be startled at the number of critical doubts which criticism is said to have refuted and at the large amount of literary evidence which all parties now admit to have come to us from the apostolic age. Were we to accept all the dates which Prof. Harnack assigns to the New Testament books we should have an amount of literature belonging to the apostolic period, on which to base at first hand a study of apostolic Christianity, quite sufficient to assure us that our knowledge of it is clear and real.

And yet the school of criticism to which Prof. Harnack belongs

is also characterized by the effort to minimize the amount of historical fact which lay at the foundation of our religion. We should not conclude from the "retrograde conclusions," as he himself styles them, concerning the dates of the literature, that Prof. Harnack means to accept the traditional account of the rise of Christianity. He believes that the structure for which the critics of the Tübingen school required a hundred and fifty years really rose in about fifty, the materials out of which it was made being all cut and trimmed for quick and ready use when once the architectonic force—the power of the personality of Jesus—began to act upon them with mystic overwhelming power. But, amid the stir and dust of the swift building-work, we are told, the historical reality about Jesus is not easy to ascertain with certainty. We cannot say that He was miraculously conceived, nor can we be quite sure of His physical resurrection, and many of His reported deeds and words are more than doubtful. His history and His teaching are seen in but dim outline. We only know that He was, and that His spiritual power over His disciples was such that He started in them the mighty current of spiritual life which swept with resistless vigor into humanity, embracing as it went whatever ideas and forces were anywhere allied in spirit with it.

Now it is fortunate that, with this minimizing and veiling of the historical Christ, there should come also the conclusion that the traditional dates of the literature are practically correct. A large basis is thus provided for argument. The possibility of reaching the historical foundation would appear to be nearer than before. It will, therefore, not be inappropriate, if we take a brief survey of the place which the historical element occupies in the New Testament. Approaching this literature, with no other assumption than that it originated in the apostolic age, let us note afresh the relation in which it shows itself to stand to the history and the place which historical fact was felt to occupy in the religion of the apostles. By first bearing in mind some of the more obvious features of the New Testament, we may be able afterwards to appreciate better its relation to more disputed details.

1. We may remind ourselves first that the New Testament books *bear internally the evidence of having arisen immediately out of the progress of apostolic history.*

The New Testament is not a volume made to order. It is not a book which reflectively surveys the whole field and consecutively discusses the whole truth with which it deals, as a work by a later hand would do. It is the literary product of an historical movement in actual process, and therefore stands in closest touch with it.

If we simply abandon for the moment the thought of the New Testament as a single volume, and think of it as a collection of documents the relative dates of which are to be investigated, the impression that these documents have arisen immediately out of occasions which the apostolic history itself produced will become strong to the vast majority of readers.

This appears, *e. g.*, in the familiar fact that the epistles were written to particular communities or persons, situated in definite circumstances, and beset by definite needs. It is possible merely by their contents to ascertain their occasions. They are full of specific allusions. Take even the Epistle of James, which is perhaps the least specific of all in its allusions. Yet it was plainly written by a Christian, who was also a devout Jew, and who saw in Christianity the natural completion of the Old Testament religion. He is not much concerned about doctrinal discussions, but he is anxious that his fellow Jewish Christians should both be true to their faith amid trial and should prove it by their lives to be the perfect law of love. He supposes synagogues in which converted and unconverted Jews would be likely to meet together. He sees that a Pharisaic and formal faith is the danger of the Christian as well as of the non-Christian Hebrew. He knows that their national pride of religion might prevent the humility which they had learned from Jesus; that their fierce zeal for country, the turbulent, rebellious spirit by which, as Josephus shows, later Judaism was marked, might destroy their spiritual life; that their busy, commercial activity might smother their faith. We see as in a picture the precise condition which from all other evidence we should expect to find in the Jewish Christians of the first generation among whom the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah had spread. So Jewish is it that Spitta thinks it is a Jewish book with Christian interpolations. But that hypothesis forgets the gradual way along which the bulk of Jewish believers, according to every indication, first passed over into the Church. Second-century Jewish Christianity would never have produced it. It fits perfectly, however, into the first age of Jewish Christianity, and may be plausibly considered the earliest extant Christian book. And if so much may be said of that epistle, how much more may be said of Paul's, which are directed to specific churches or persons and deal in the most lively and graphic measure with their temptations and sins and duties.

Again, the historical books of the New Testament are marked by a notorious incompleteness. None of the Gospels treat the whole life or even the whole ministry of Jesus Christ. Each of them says in effect what the fourth says explicitly, "Many other signs

did Jesus which are not written in this book." St. Luke's works alone betray a genuine historical motive; but even his purpose did not cover the whole ground. All the historical books were written for the immediate religious use of their readers. Luke himself states that his object was that Theophilus might know the certainty of the things in which he had been instructed. The historical books as well as the epistles testify to the fact that their production was due, not to the reflection of a later age, but to the necessities caused by the earliest religious needs of a rising community.

Still further, we note the variety of the motives which led to the production of this literature. We are plainly in contact with a movement into which entered a great many kinds of moving forces, practical and theoretical, individual, social and civil, ethical and theological and ecclesiastical, intellectual and religious—as would be expected in a real movement in human society. Here there is the impress of a strong personality, like that of Paul, with its intense emotion and delicate power and eager effort to lay down the duties of the Christians; again, there is the impress of a truth, working out its results in the concrete national relations of Jew and Gentile. There are varieties of style; back of that there are varieties of culture and training; different aspects of the same truth presented by different writers; different types of mind disclosed in different forms of literary production. The literature thus discloses the intensity and living reality of the history by its variety of motive. Nothing but a profound movement in the minds of men could cause so many chords to vibrate.

Still further, the books are for the most part independent of one another. Peter's epistles, indeed, show acquaintance with James' and Paul's and Jude's, and the fourth Gospel shows acquaintance with the synoptics. But even when acquaintance of one with another may be proved, there is independence; and if one writer occasionally borrows from another, he has his own distinct individuality undiminished; while in the majority of cases the independence is unqualified. Of course the later writers must have been familiar with the earlier works, and the apostolic literature as a whole was soon recognized as a bequest of the apostles to the Church. But in its production it is essentially the work of independent writers, each of whom, even when he consciously followed another, felt himself qualified to speak on his own authority in the name of the truth.

Yet again, the literary forms of these books are very simple and primitive. The rhetorician, the epic poet, the speculative philosopher had not yet appeared. There are eloquent passages, but

they are kindled by the presence of a living audience. There are rhythmic sentences and fragments of song, but they are all the products of devout emotion or the rude beginnings of worship. There are lofty theological arguments, but they are begotten of specific and concrete situations. There are visions of the unseen, described in highly symbolical language, but their drapery is mostly borrowed from the Old Testament and their incentive lay in the stress upon the writer of actual events. The Greek purist may look with contempt at the Hebraic construction and the rude diction, the unartificial, uncultured style of much of the New Testament; but for that very reason are we the more confident that it is the immediate product of the apostolic age, and that its genesis was directly due to a movement too real to be artificial, too intense to be polished, too practical to produce the finer forms of literary composition.

And finally, the New Testament books are all of them, with the exception of Luke's, plainly the product of Hebrew minds, though written in Greek. Not only is their style Hebraistic, but the writers think in Hebrew forms. Their conceptions of God, of redemption, of the future, of the moral life, are all Hebrew. St. John is no exception, for his Logos doctrine shows no affiliation with Greek thought except the name; and even St. Luke, who was a Gentile, while he certainly possessed elements of Greek culture, was so thoroughly saturated with Hebrew modes of thought and life that he really forms no exception to the rule. It is true that Paul's epistles indicate that he, too, was not unfamiliar with Hellenic, especially Stoic, thought, and with some of the legal forms and many of the social customs of the Græco-Roman world. He uses these as illustrations. Possibly, as in the doctrine of adoption, they did affect his statements of doctrine to a slight degree. But, as Prof. Harnack says, Paul is "the highest product of the Jewish spirit," and the premises and processes of his theology lie wholly in the Hebrew sphere.

This Hebraism of apostolic literature is specially significant. It conclusively proves that the literature belongs to the constructive apostolic period, and was born out of the lives of Hebrew apostles. Post-apostolic literature shows itself in some of its aspects to have been likewise the immediate product of its history, and some of the features we have pointed out in the New Testament may also be found in it. But the great bulk of second-century literature differs from the New Testament conspicuously by the infusion into it of Gentile, philosophical, Alexandrian, Græco-Roman modes of thought which bespeak the new training out of which the Christians of the post-apostolic period generally came.

In Prof. Harnack's recent book the literature of the first two centuries is presented with no discrimination as regards its quality and, except in the table at the close of the volume, with no chronological arrangement. The result is to obscure the differences which really exist. In fact, there is a great gulf between apostolic and post-apostolic literature, both as regards freshness and vigor and as regards the prevailing premises and processes of thought. In the post-apostolic age we have a literature sensible of its dependence on the age preceding, and endeavoring, with many failures and mistakes, to follow in the way of its predecessor. In the New Testament literature we have works whose occasion, incompleteness, variety of motive, independence, simplicity and freshness, and pervading Hebraism testify to their being the direct products of the apostolic history itself.

2. But this literature further *discloses an actual progress in the history* against which it lies so closely. Our canonical arrangement of the books of the New Testament obviously suggests at once such a historical movement. It begins with the fourfold history of Christ and is followed by the history of the creation of Gentile Christianity. Then to the historical books are joined the epistles and the Apocalypse, without, however, any attempt at chronological arrangement. This exhibits in a rough way the historical basis for the rise and progress of apostolic Christianity. The arrangement in its substantial features goes back to the second century. It shows the conviction of the post-apostolic Church that apostolic literature represented and was based upon a real history. But the question may be raised whether this early, yet post-apostolic, conviction was correct. Is there anything in the literature itself to confirm it? Certainly the beliefs of those so near to the apostolic age are entitled to the highest respect. Yet they erred in other things, and some claim that they erred in this. Let us, therefore, note the evidence which the books themselves contain of the course of the history out of which they grew.

(a) We note that they disclose a progress in *doctrinal teaching* which evidently implies an historical progress back of it. Few doubt, *e. g.*, as to the general order in which the epistles of Paul were written. They fall into four groups as naturally as if they had been dated. The Epistles to the Thessalonians deal precisely with those topics which would naturally come forward in the first preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles, viz., the divine judgment upon sin and the believer's hope in the future triumph of Christ, together with the necessity of a pure life and patient endurance. The Epistles to the Galatians and Corinthians and Romans as obviously belong later, since they deal with questions

which suppose further reflection on the way of salvation and the rise of controversy in the Church, caused by the extension of the Gospel among the Gentiles, as well as with Church difficulties which required time for their development. While their relative order may be a question, yet they clearly belong to the same period—the Galatians and Romans most obviously, but the Corinthians also, since 2 Corinthians reflects the same Judaistic controversy and opposition to Paul's apostolic authority, and it could not have been long separated from 1 Corinthians. The latter also implies a development of both church life and doctrinal error which forces us to place it later than the Epistles to the Thessalonians. In like manner the Epistles of the Imprisonment, with their changed situation of the apostle and the emergence of speculative error offset by a more elaborate Christology, as certainly belong to a still later period; and the Pastorals, as every one will now admit, to the latest of all. The other epistles likewise arrange themselves quite clearly on the same principle. The Epistle to the Hebrews implies a period when Jewish Christianity had long existed and was in the midst of a crisis caused by a false but patriotic attachment to the tottering, or perhaps just fallen, ritual; while the Epistles of John as plainly bespeak the "last hour," as the writer calls it, of the apostolic age, and belong to the same type of thought as the fourth Gospel. There may be more room for debate as to the location of James, and Peter, Jude and the Apocalypse; but enough has been already ascertained to make difference of opinion in regard to them unimportant for our point.

And not only so, but the historical books, so far as they contain didactic elements, discover to us the same progress of doctrinal statement. The speeches of Peter in the early chapters of the Acts evince such an undeveloped statement of the faith that they cannot but be located at the beginning of the process of apostolic teaching. They are content to prove Jesus Messiah from Old Testament prophecy, to summon Israel to repentance, to proclaim the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus as "the servant of Jehovah," and to point to the glory of Messiah and His Israel in the approaching future. Nor do we hesitate to affirm that the teaching of Christ, as reported in the Gospels, provides, when judged internally, the rich germ out of which the other doctrinal statements of the New Testament may be explained as growing. Many attempts have been made to show that the evangelists report the teaching of Christ under the dominance of later doctrinal ideas; and we may admit that in the selection of their material the later situation of the writer, his special purpose and the needs of his

readers, may more or less be discerned. But it is certain that their reports present Christ as teaching in a form which cannot have been conceived in the light of the later doctrinal modes of statement. Paulinism, *e. g.*, is just as obviously a later statement of truth than the Sermon on the Mount, or the Parables, as Augustinianism is later than Nicæa or the Westminster Confession than Calvin. Even in the Fourth Gospel, though the writer had an explicit doctrine of the Logos, and though he intended to support it by his report of Christ's teaching, he never imputes its terminology to Him.

Thus a progress of didactic statement surely appears in the apostolic literature. Its existence is the demonstrated result of exegesis and its detailed ascertainment the problem of Biblical Theology. But of course all this infallibly indicates an historical movement of the most real and profound character. Whether the impetus to advancing doctrinal statement be supposed to have come from within or from without the Christian community, or both from within and from without, its presence in the New Testament is a demonstration that the literature registers a real history which, so far as it pertains to the thought and religious life of the primitive community, this doctrinal advance will enable us confidently to ascertain.

(b) And further still, we note that the literature, including now the development of doctrine, discloses *definite historical relations and especially definite conflicts* which respond to every test of reality. I am purposely leaving out the express historical statements of the historical books. I want to remind you that if we take only the teaching contained in the New Testament we have still a disclosure of a definite historical movement. Thus the reported teaching of Jesus at once takes us back to the Jewish world with its sects and parties; with its social customs, religious beliefs, civil and political conditions; with its characteristic faults and its well-known hopes. That teaching, unless all our knowledge of past history be false, could not have been delivered except in that land and among that people and under the political and religious circumstances which we know existed at the period when the Gospel affirms that Christ lived. We could as easily imagine the Buddha arising in modern England as Jesus anywhere else or at any other time than when and where the New Testament locates him. And then the Epistles again reflect with equal appropriateness the changed and changing situations which must have come about if such a doctrinal development as they present did ensue, and if, as we know to have been the case, the religion of Jesus became the Gentile Christianity of the second century.

The breach with Judaism, *e. g.*, could not have been immediate ; and so there must have resulted a community of Jewish Christians such as is implied in the Epistle of James. But Gentile Christianity could not have been established without violent opposition, and so the Judaistic controversy, as reflected in the epistles of Paul, becomes historically almost a necessity. The spread of Judaism in the dispersion and its frequent combination with foreign ideas is a well-known fact, the importance of which is every day becoming more clear ; and so the rise within the Pauline churches of half-Jewish, half-Pagan error precisely corresponds to what the situation would naturally lead us to expect. So the history of persecution, as revealed in the Epistles, shows it to have been first only at the hands of the Jews, and not till much later at the hands of the Romans, just as, in view of the strongly Hebrew character of the movement at the first, and its gradual widening into the consciousness of a universal religion, we may be sure was really the case. Finally, the Johannine writings exhibit the Church's world-consciousness, as we may call it, its sense of being universal in its mission and in opposition to the world, which precisely corresponds to the situation as it must have existed at the close of the century according to the testimony of those writers, like Clement and Ignatius, who were either contemporary or followed soon after.

Thus it appears that the apostolic literature discloses a real history, the progress of which in its essential outlines can be ascertained from the literature quite apart from the historical narratives which are included in it. These latter, however, are confirmed by their agreement with the other indications of the literature. Its implications coincide with their express affirmations. I do not now refer to the details of the Gospels and Acts, but to their general outlines ; though it must be obvious that trustworthiness in those portions where a narrative can be verified is so much evidence in favor of its trustworthiness in other portions. The principal fact to be remembered is that the literature not only, as we have seen, bears the marks of having arisen out of an actual history, but that it also discloses, apart from its direct statements, the outlines of the progress of the history. That history makes the literature intelligible. All this gives one the feeling that he is dealing in the literature with what is genuine ; that the movement was not an artificial or a superficial one, and that the books which survive from it are trustworthy and sufficient witnesses of the historical forces which caused and carried forward the movement itself.

3. Let us look, then, at the creating, controlling forces which are shown by the literature to have been operative in the primi-

tive Christian communities, with a view particularly to the part which belief in historical fact played in the movement as a whole.

New Testament literature reveals apostolic Christianity as a vital movement in society, and as, just because it was so vital, a very complex one. That is to say, it contained many elements and combined them by the vigor and vitality of the Spirit that was in it. We may see in it, *e. g.*, that intense religious faith which was characteristic of the best type of Hebrew piety, with its strict monotheism, its belief in revelation, its acceptance of the Old Testament as inspired, its doctrine of redemption, its strong expectation of a Messiah and with Him of deliverance for the Israel of God. We may also see in it a vigorous intellectual movement, since it awakened the mind to the necessity of some statement in explanation of its lowly origin and great claims, as well as to the contemplation of God revealed by Christ, of His ways with men as viewed in the light of Christ's person and career, and of the dignity of Christ Himself. We may further see in it a tremendous moral movement, an intense manifestation of that view of life which surrenders pleasure for the sake of duty, the visible for the spiritual, present desire for future reward, and which in this instance made holiness, as revealed in God and in the life of Christ, the actual prize for which men strove. So we may see in it a social movement, which bound men of all classes and races into a brotherhood whose bond was religious faith operative in mutual love. In like manner it evidently had ethnic and even political relations; and if these illustrate its more external features and effects, we may see in it also a profoundly spiritual life, unfolding itself in conduct and in thought, and, like an organism, bringing out of its earliest form its later fruits. So apostolic Christianity lies before the historical student. It is obvious that so complex a movement must have been very profound; that it must have had a strong basis; that it must have been impelled by considerations which completely mastered the minds and hearts of its followers. This complexity is revealed in the literature, as we have already shown, and the inquirer cannot but ask what was the ultimate producing cause.

The inquiry is rendered the more urgent because of the vigorous intellectual and moral life disclosed in the literature. The new theory of the genesis of Christianity, represented by Prof. Harnack, tells us that the overpowering, uniting, crystallizing force was the enthusiasm produced by the moral influence of Jesus and His proclamation of the kingdom of God. This was launched at an opportune time, when ideas were already current in and out of Judaism which it used, with the result of erecting in a very few

years the complex structure which appears in our New Testament. The New Testament gives us the conceptions about Christ's earthly life and about His person, with the deductions from them, which the apostolic age manufactured by the power of its unparalleled enthusiasm out of the materials which lay around it in the Jewish and then in the Hellenic and Roman worlds.* We ask, however, was it an unintelligent enthusiasm which thus displayed itself so vigorously in the intellectual and moral spheres? So far as it was intellectual, it must have felt compelled to give an account of itself which would not consciously violate known truth. So far as it was moral, it must have been still more impelled not to practice conscious deception. Was the enthusiasm of the apostles, as revealed in the literature, a riotous speculative tendency, or a tumultuous child of fancy? Does it reveal itself to us in its literary productions, like the Gnostic remains of the second century, as having cut itself loose from dependence on objective fact? Able to absorb whatever truth it found elsewhere it certainly was. But that is a very different thing from the conception of it as creating by speculation and absorption from foreign sources its own history of Jesus and throwing its own intellectual garment about His figure. Now there would seem to be no better way of testing the matter than by examining the attitude which the producers of apostolic literature consciously maintained to the history in which they were actors. In illustration of this we may note the following points :

(1) The first is, that side by side with the production of didactic works like the Epistles, there went in the apostolic Church the production of historical works; and that it was after doctrinal controversy and activity had fully developed that the production of historical literature concerning the life of Christ and the earlier course of the Church reached its height and its final expression. In other words, the Gospels and the Acts were written, as we have seen, after many of the Epistles. They, however, were not the first attempts to set forth the facts on which Christianity was based. Luke, in his preface, refers to previous ones. We have reason to believe that his Gospel gives a fair idea of what

* To quote from the Preface of Prof. Harnack's recent book : "Sobald man sich aber klar macht, dass von Anfang an in der Jüngerschaft Christi die Kräfte eines pneumatischen Enthusiasmus ebenso entfesselt gewesen sind, wie der Trieb, die Schätze der tiefsten Erkenntnisse zu heben, und dass diese Kräfte und Triebe in einem Zeitalter wirksam wurden, zu dessen in der Geschichte beispiellosem Reichthum an religiösen und sittlichen Erkenntnissen, Geschichtsbetrachtungen und Mysterien nichts mehr fehlte als das Evangelium und die Befreiung des Willens, damit er wolle—, so wird man sich über die Fülle gleichzeitiger religiöser Gedanken und Formbildungen und wiederum über die Schnelligkeit ihrer Entwicklung nicht mehr wundern."

formed a regular part of St. Paul's preaching. All along the course of the history, the "Gospel" had been preached. It consisted primarily of the message of Jesus and the message about Jesus; so that from the earliest times the books which contained the story of Jesus were called "Gospels," and their combined reports the Gospel. Historical testimony was, therefore, from the beginning, a constant factor in the mind of apostolic Christianity. The literature shows irrefutably that it was as widespread and as invariable a feature of the propagation of the new religion as doctrinal instruction was. In fact, it bloomed out, as we have said, in greater prominence as the apostolic age drew toward its close. The historical interest was evidently considered fundamental. The desire for historical knowledge evidently grew as time separated the disciples from the beginning. The wish to put it in permanent form was the motive for the written Gospels. The interest in the history appears steadily advancing when Luke undertook to draw up his two books on the historical basis and rise of Gentile Christianity—books in which a grasp on the internal and external relation of events most clearly appears. What does all this mean, if not that the new religion felt itself to rest on historical facts; that these were thought a necessity for its comprehension; that they were constantly and laboriously reported; and that the principal aim was to rest the faith of the Church on the actual events and teachings given in the history of Jesus?

It is said, however, this was not done in a really historical spirit; that the Gospels show a free working over of the story of Jesus for the purposes of religious or doctrinal instruction; that they subordinate historical truth to religious motives and do not show real reverence for historical fact. A critic's opinion in this matter is, of course, the result of many small considerations, each one of which would, in a complete discussion, have to be examined by itself; but there are some larger and more patent features of the Gospels which may be mentioned here.

One is, that it can no longer be maintained that our Gospels were written under the influence of constraining theological tendencies. Prof. Harnack, as we have seen, puts them in the first century, and is willing to date Mark as far back as 65-70. That they have no controlling doctrinal tendency is now also quite generally admitted. It ought to be evident to all careful students of them. Matthew's is not a Jewish Gospel, for it distinctly contemplates the rejection of the Jews, the call of the Gentiles and universal Christianity (*e. g.*, viii. 11, 12, xxi. 33-46, xxviii. 19, 20). Mark's is a narrative delighting in purely objective incidents, with the vivid touches of an eye-witness, and governed, as has always been observed, by no

theological motive at all. Luke's is not Pauline in any polemic sense, bases his narrative on the testimony of the original witnesses, and has even been accused of Ebionism. Thus no controlling tendency appears in their production; and if they be dated as early as Prof. Harnack dates them, the suggestion becomes doubly incredible.

Another fact is that the Epistles, so far as they contain historical allusions to Jesus, agree entirely with the Gospels. They do contain many such allusions, some of which I shall note presently. They provide contemporaneous, yet independent, evidence. The perfect harmony of their implications with the Gospel narratives is a strong support to the simplicity and trustworthiness of the latter.

A third consideration is, that the Fourth Gospel, which *was* written in the interest of doctrine, is the most minute of all in its historical references and details. It gives us the framework of Christ's life. It introduces a multitude of small facts which evidently lingered in the vivid remembrance of the author. It even describes the feelings of the disciples on the several occasions in Christ's life on which they were specially moved. Though setting Jesus forth as divine, it tells of His weariness, His tears, His broken heart. It utterly resists the idea that the drift of Gospel literature was to depart from facts in the interest of pious fancy or Old Testament prophecy or doctrinal ideas. Yet it stands at the close of the apostolic age and evidently assumed familiarity with the earlier narrative contained in the Synoptics.

These considerations decidedly oppose the view that the Gospels are free reworkings of the story of Jesus. As they stand before us in the literature they attest a conscious dependence of the apostolic Church on history, reverence for facts, the effort to conserve the facts as they really happened as well as to show their signification for the Church.

(2) Yet it is not alone the historical portions of the New Testament which reveal the attitude of the apostolic Christians to their history. The didactic books afford an equally cogent line of evidence. For the doctrinal teachings imply belief in the history; the doctrines are built upon the supposition that certain facts are true; and while the doctrines are differently expressed by different writers, all of them presuppose the same historical facts. Take, *e. g.*, any of the Christological passages of St. Paul, as, for instance, that in the second chapter of Philippians, beginning "Who being in the form of God," etc. It is an appeal to the Philippians to imitate Jesus, and the doctrinal richness of the section arises from the apostle's desire to set the known mind of the Master vividly before them. It begins, indeed, with the state-

ment of Christ's preëxistence, but only that it may bring out the meaning of His earthly life. He made Himself of no account. He was a real man. He humbled Himself to be obedient to the death of the cross. He was raised and exalted. The facts are placed in their doctrinal framework, but the whole force of the passage would be lost if writer and reader did not assume the same objective facts. It is again Paul who entreats them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (2 Cor. x. 1); who reminds them that though the Lord was rich, yet for their sakes He became poor (2 Cor. xiii. 9); who placarded Christ crucified before the Galatians (iv. 1); who describes Jesus as "made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. iv. 4), "of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. i. 3); who appealed to His teaching as well known to the Corinthians (1 Cor. vii. 10), and reëchoes it in the twelfth chapter of "Romans;" who describes Christ's institution of the Supper "on the night in which he was betrayed" (1 Cor. xi), and marshals the apostolic witness to the resurrection (1 Cor. xv). When we turn to Peter we find the assumption of and reference to the same or similar facts, to the resurrection (i. 3), the holiness and patience of Jesus at His trial (ii. 22, etc.), certainly to the Lord's last commands to feed His sheep (v. 1-4), not to speak of the open allusions in the Second Epistle to the Transfiguration and the Lord's prediction of Peter's death. The Epistle to the Hebrews is anonymous; but whether by Paul or Barnabas, or any other, it is specially rich in allusions to the facts of Christ's life. It declares the Gospel to have been first spoken unto them by the Lord (iv. 15), to the Redeemer's agony in the garden (v. 7), to His temptations (iv. 15), to His lofty character, "holy, harmless, undefiled" (vii. 26), to His crucifixion without the walls of Jerusalem (xiii. 22), as well as to His death and resurrection. Even in the Apocalypse, with its highly figurative descriptions, we do not find a syllable that suggests belief in any other history of Jesus than that with which we are familiar in the Gospels; while in the first Epistle of John, the sublime doctrine of eternal life through the eternal Word is linked with the writer's assurance that "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled," was the One through whom the life was manifested. In all these explanations we may see doctrine laying hold of the mind of the Christian writer,—profound, startling, mysterious ideas,—but these always growing out of alleged objective facts. The doctrine is simply the explication of the facts; and throughout the whole didactic part of the literature, the same facts are assumed as the ground for every doctrinal manifesto.

Moreover, the very indirectness and occasional manner in which the historical facts are thus referred to is an indication that the writers assumed as true what all believed, and that there was no tendency, intentional or unintentional, to create the facts. A writer, elaborating an idea which he wished his fellow-Christians to believe, but which did not rest on well-accredited facts, would have been sure to have interwoven into his thesis a more or less extensive account of the story as he wished it to be believed, and would have sought to attest it as true. This is just what we do find in the apocryphal, and still more in the heretical, literature of the second and third centuries. So we find in the Gospel and Apocalypse of Peter, in the acts of Paul and Thecla, in Clementine's Homilies and Recognitions. Here ideas are bolstered up by alleged historical narratives. But while the allusions to the history in the New Testament Epistles are sufficient to show the outline of fact which was believed, and while the doctrine grew evidently out of a belief in the facts, the facts are not elaborated nor manipulated nor are they made conspicuous as if the writer were seeking to justify his conclusions. They simply lie at the basis of the doctrine, and indicate very clearly that the intellectual and ethical advance of apostolic Christianity rested not on a fluctuating or fluid tradition, but on a history, the outlines of which all knew and loved to repeat, and which lay before them in substantially a fixed form.

(3) And now to these considerations may be added as a third the great stress which the New Testament shows was from first to last laid on *the testimony of the apostles*. The position assigned to the apostles in the Book of Acts is well known. If, on the one hand, they were the authoritative founders of the Church, through whom the Spirit uttered His will, not indeed to the exclusion of other organs but as His established, official channels, so that the Acts may be described as the narrative of the establishment of Gentile Christianity by the Spirit through the apostles; on the other hand they were the specific witnesses to the historical life and teaching of the Lord. When it was proposed to select a successor to the traitor, these conditions of the apostolate were laid down. "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." Thus apostolic testimony to the historical ministry of Jesus was the express foundation on which the establishment of the Church was held to rest. And this cannot be regarded as a later idea, imputed by the author of Acts to the earliest believers, and displacing a

condition of things in which each believer was an independent authority to himself. For all the other books of the Testament agree in this representation of the apostolic office. The Gospels do so explicitly, for the Synoptics record the selection of "the twelve" that they might be Christ's chosen representatives; and John records the promise, "Ye also shall be witnesses, because ye have been with me from the beginning." With this agrees St. Paul's habitual description both of his own apostolic prerogatives and of the college to which he belonged. In 1 Cor. xv he marshals the apostolic witness to the resurrection, and in Eph. ii. 20 declares that the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. In the same vein write Peter and Jude and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Not only do we read of them "that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," and the solemn declaration that "we have not spoken cunningly devised fables, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty," and the strong exhortation to "remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;" but we are told of that "great salvation, which first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will." On the testimony of eye-witnesses Luke tells us, the Gospel history was written and the city of God in the vision of the Apocalypse rests on twelve foundations which are the twelve apostles of the Lamb. It is clear that, according to the unanimous testimony of the apostolic literature, the witness of the apostles to the historical life and teachings of Jesus was a constant and primary factor in the mind of the original Church. Their authority as teachers was inseparably connected with their authority as witnesses. Their doctrines were not independent truths but elucidations and applications of the historical teaching and work of Jesus. While God often spoke directly to others, nothing was held to be certainly true which did not agree with apostolic instruction. The reliance on these competent, chosen and accredited witnesses to what Jesus had said and done was the framework of the faith, which thus declared itself to be consciously and conscientiously derived from explicit historical evidence. None might override apostolic authority. "If any man," says Paul, "thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you that they are the commandment of the Lord." That authority was no less concerning history than it was concerning doctrine. The two were always conjoined and the posi-

tion which, according to every evidence, the apostles occupied, as witnesses and as teachers, in the primitive Church, proves not only that the early believers acknowledged an external inspired authority, but also that in their consciousness the historical facts on which their religion rested were felt to be fundamental, were carefully cherished, were accepted because the evidence for them was clear and the witnesses trustworthy, and formed the ground of their belief and conduct.

Thus the literature shows the large part which the historical element played in the complex life of the apostolic Church. It is true, of course, that the historical Christ became more and more resplendent with heavenly light. The vast significance of His advent upon earth and of His death upon the cross more clearly appeared. The dignity of His person was more accurately defined. His place in the world's history and in the life of the cosmos loomed out more and more grandly. The Old Testament received new interpretation, and in turn shed new light on the lowly but now risen Redeemer. Other truths obtained fresh meaning when related to Him and His mission. Christianity became more and more a complete system of truth and life as the incarnate Word was spelled out in the language of the intellect and of the heart, and spoken in synagogue, school and ecclesia. But the evidence resists the idea that this was an idealization of Him or of His history, or that the apostolic believers ever lost their hold on the original facts. It was not a merely moral impression which He had made upon them, nor was He a figure of dough in the hands of their speculation or enthusiasm. The historical side of their religious consciousness maintained its place. Out of His history, reported by competent witnesses, and then illuminated by the Spirit, but always out of the history does the literature show that Christianity arose and spread.

Thus the New Testament, like a geological section, reveals infallibly the processes, and the order of the processes, by which the Christian world was made. There has been no need to call to our aid the doctrine of inspiration. The record may be read by any one and the facts ascertained. The persistent doubter will have either to call to his aid the doctrine that miracles are impossible or else undertake to show how this universal, intelligent and sober conviction concerning historical facts, attested by eye-witnesses and related in a remarkably fixed form, arose and maintained itself. To do so, with the evidence as we now have it, will require a subtler ingenuity than has ever yet appeared in the museum of criticism. For us the conclusion is quite different. We obtain fresh confidence in the veracity of that testimony con

cerning Jesus which His apostles gave, which explains apostolic history and is woven, as we have seen, into the fabric of their literature as it was into that of their lives. True, He is a supernatural Christ; but He is none the less on that account historical. As we study the records, we receive a clear, strong vision of Him whose coming created Christianity, who spoiled the principalities and powers of the ancient world and brought salvation to millions of our race. After modern doubt in its frantic effort to reduce Christianity to a minimum has gone back from the Reformation to the Fathers, and from Augustine to the Greeks, and from the Greeks to the apostles, and from the apostles to Christ—so that the cry, “Back to Christ,” has become an axe with which to break down the building work of the Christian centuries, by a strange Nemesis we are told that of Christ Himself we can know nothing with certainty except that He lived and taught. His existence cannot be doubted nor that He exerted tremendous spiritual power. Somebody was there, it is plain, and men called Him rightly the Christ. But He is to us “the veiled Prophet” of Judea. We may not look upon His face. We do not know certainly just what He said. We are not sure even of what He did. We must be content to do as it is said the first disciples did—make Him the figure over which to cast our own ideals of what is best and holiest. This is the Christ which a certain prevalent type of modern theology is offering to the world. He cannot be expected to do much to heal the world’s wounds. He has no clear message from the other world, and so not much of a one for this. In contrast with Him we confidently place the historical Christ of the New Testament, “who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” Into His face the New Testament enables us to look. His words we do know. His deeds we may see. His sorrow moves our gratitude. His resurrection justifies our trust and declares our life. This is the Christ of the apostles; the Christ who made Christianity at the beginning; the Christ to trust, to preach and to save the world. It is to His feet that our study of the New Testament will lead us. It is His truth that we shall hear and believe. It is in communion with Him that our minds and hearts will glow. It is He whom you will here learn to proclaim to the world to which He sends us with His message of eternal life.

PRINCETON.

GEORGE T. PURVES.